



PRESS RELEASE

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Private East Molokai Lands Permanently Protected from Development

Wailuku, Maui—Third-generation rancher Kip Dunbar protected 168 acres of his Kainalu Ranch on Molokai's south-eastern shore with an agricultural conservation easement last week thanks to two unprecedented conservation grants leveraged by the Maui Coastal Land Trust (MCLT). The first grants of their kind in Hawaii came from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), run by the United States Department of Agriculture and the State of Hawaii's Legacy Land Conservation Program (LLCP), run by the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources.

In the agreement, development rights were purchased from Kainalu Ranch by MCLT, placing a permanent conservation easement on the acreage to keep it in open space and agricultural use. "Though my children and I have no intentions of leaving Molokai," said Dunbar, "this agreement has given us the assurance that these lands will remain in agriculture and open space no matter who may come to own them in the future."

MCLT partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Pacific Island Area office in Honolulu on a cooperative agreement to initiate the first FRPP award in Hawaii and insure the conservation plans at Kainalu Ranch met required program standards. "MCLT and NRCS were instrumental in assisting our family in procuring a living agreement that the community could appreciate and respect," said Dunbar.

"The NRCS oversaw some very strict requirements for this program," said MCLT Executive Director Dale Bonar. "It serves to protect farmland for agricultural production and more importantly, keeps the farmer/rancher in agriculture. While the purchase of a permanent agricultural easement does not provide the landowner with the same level of financial benefit that might come from developing the property, it provides the incentive for an owner to stay in farming. Just as important, it may be the only way heirs could keep the land since its value is reduced thus reducing probate taxes," Bonar continued.

(more)

A nationwide initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program serves to protect prime agricultural acreage from further development. “We are pleased that the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program is available as a tool to help protect Hawaii’s important agricultural land” said Larry Yamamoto, Director of the NRCS, Pacific Islands Area. “Keeping agricultural lands available for our grand children and their grand children is critical for sustaining Hawaii’s future.” Funds are provided to purchase conservation easements on lands that are: privately owned, large enough to sustain agricultural production, accessible to markets and have adequate infrastructure and agricultural support services. Land owners retain rights to use the property for agriculture in perpetuity.

Also tapped for the first time under this agreement was the Land Conservation Fund, through the State of Hawaii’s Legacy Land Conservation Program. “This program came along at the same time that the State of Hawaii was recognizing the urgency and value of protecting important agricultural lands.” said Allan Smith, Interim Chairperson of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. “Brought into law in 2005, the Legacy Lands Act designated a small percentage of the real estate conveyance fees as the funding source. The program now provides about \$5 million per year for fee or easement acquisition, which is critical in matching federal and foundation grants, in conservation projects such as this one at Kainalu Ranch.”

Established as a non-profit corporation in December 2000, The Maui Coastal Land Trust’s mission is: “To preserve and protect coastal lands in Maui Nui for the benefit of the natural environment and of current and future generations.” With offices in Wailuku, MCLT is Hawaii’s first local fully-staffed land trust organization. For more information visit www.mauicoastallandtrust.org.

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